



Los Angeles County Office of Education

Leading Educators • Supporting Students • Serving Communities

August 10, 2006

Darline P. Robles, Ph.D.
Superintendent

TO: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

Los Angeles County
Board of Education

Sophia Waugh
President

FROM: Darline P. Robles, Ph.D.
Superintendent 

Rudell S. Freer
Vice President

SUBJECT: Juvenile Court & Community Schools (JCCS) Camps
Special Education Pilot Project – Six-Month Report

María A. Casillas

Leslie K. Gilbert-Lurie

Angie Papadakis

Thomas A. Saenz

Rebecca J. Turrentino

At the direction of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) conducted a pilot project to better identify and serve students with disabilities in the juvenile court school system.

The pilot was conducted at 12 LACOE-run schools that serve the county's juvenile detention camps and the Dorothy Kirby Center. It was conducted during the six-month period January 10 to July 10, 2006, with all schools phased in by March 2006. The goal was to develop an enhanced screening process to identify students who may be eligible for special education services within 48 hours of school enrollment.

Per the Board's direction, LACOE is providing this report one month following the end date of the pilot. As requested, this report provides information on:

- Resources required to conduct the pilot project
- Legislative and other strategies undertaken to address the issue
- Information on students involved in the pilot

Resources

Additional human and material resources were required to conduct the pilot, and to provide assessments and services to an anticipated increase of more than 30 percent in the population of students who require special education services.

The total budget for the 6-month pilot was \$2.3 million. This includes:

- Hiring of additional staff (\$1.8 million):
 - 1 program administrator
 - 13 school psychologists
 - 13 resource specialist teachers
 - 10 paraeducators (instructional aides)
 - 11 school clerks

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- Additional materials/resources/supplies (\$474,000), including, for example:
 - Computer hardware/software
 - Assessment kits and test protocols

The estimated annual budget for the 2006-07 school year is \$4 million to assess and serve the additional population of students receiving special education services in the 13 schools included in the pilot project.

Legislative and Other Strategies

Research shows that 35 to 50 percent of young offenders have learning disabilities that would qualify them to receive special education services. Yet the court school system only receives funding to cover special education for approximately 10 percent of students — the same rate as in the regular education setting.

Funding to provide services to students with disabilities in our juvenile court schools comes from the LACOE Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). The LACOE SELPA receives a total of \$4 million annually, which is severely inadequate to meet the needs of students in the juvenile court school system.

Over the years, LACOE has pursued legislative remedies to address this issue. Most recent efforts are:

- Proposed a bill to address funding for the LACOE SELPA. This proposal would have provided equity adjustment to LACOE by re-benchmarking the current average daily attendance (ADA) rate. The Assembly Budget Subcommittee on School Finance had included \$3.5 million for this item in the budget. The Budget Conference Committee ultimately reduced the \$3.5 million to approximately \$225,000 and placed it in the \$75 million pool for special education equalization. Unfortunately, the item, along with the entire \$75 million, was rejected by the "Big Five" during negotiations on the final version of the budget.
- SB 1777 would provide education support services for incarcerated foster youth who attend juvenile court schools. The bill would provide that each county office of education operating a juvenile court school be required to designate transition counselors to encourage foster children to continue their education after release from the juvenile detention facility and assist in their transition to a public school. LACOE anticipates passage of this bill would provide additional resources to help support the special education needs of foster youth in juvenile court schools. The bill passed the Assembly Education Committee and will now be considered by the Assembly Appropriations Committee. In addition, the Governor signed AB 1808, the Child Care and Foster Youth Services Trailer Bill, which expands the Foster Youth Services Education Program statewide to foster children and youth in all types of placements and funds this with \$8.2 million. This includes funding to county offices for foster youth who reside in county-operated juvenile detention facilities.

Given that legislative remedies have had limited success, LACOE is exploring two alternative strategies:

- *Disband the LACOE SELPA.* The LACOE SELPA is funded at a flat rate per student that is not adequate to cover the actual costs of providing special education services. Other SELPAs within Los Angeles County receive funds that more fully cover special education costs. An effective option may be to disband the LACOE SELPA and join LACOE-run schools with one or more school district SELPAs.

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- *Bill School Districts.* Students — most of whom are high-school age — enter the juvenile court school system from school districts of residence around the county. The districts are the entities that should be assessing their students and ensuring those eligible have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in place that document the types of special education services required — especially by the time these students are teenagers. An effective option may be to bill each student's school district of residence for the cost of the special education assessment, which runs about \$1,000 per student.

Student Information/Results of the Pilot

The pilot did not involve students already receiving special education services nor those undergoing special education assessment.

Students were considered eligible for special education assessment if they:

- Were new to the school or had been out of the juvenile court school system for at least two months.
- Scored at or below the 5th-grade level in reading and/or math on the "STAR Advantage" standardized test.

During the 6-month pilot:

- Total new enrollment: 1,008 students
- Number of students already identified for special education: 183 (includes self-identified)
- Number of students given STAR Advantage test: 825
- Number of students scoring at or below 5th grade level: 545

Federal law requires that LACOE secure parent/guardian permission to conduct a special education assessment. Of the 545 students identified to receive an assessment, LACOE has been working to secure permission to assess 469 students (76 students have left the system).

To date, LACOE has received 218 permission responses. Assessments are ongoing, and as of this writing:

- Number of completed assessments (including IEP meeting): 73
- Number of students identified for special education services with IEP in place: 33

LACOE is committed to continuing this enhanced screening process to better identify and serve youth with disabilities in the county's care — even though funding to do so is currently inadequate. At the same time, we are investigating various options to address funding issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to update you on this important effort. Please do not hesitate to contact me for additional information or with any questions or concerns.

DPR/MM

cc: Chief Deputies
Educational Deputies
Board of Education
Mr. David E. Janssen, CAO



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